

Virginia Department of Historic Resources

PIF Resource Information Sheet

This information sheet is designed to provide the Virginia Department of Historic Resources with the necessary data to be able to evaluate the significance of the proposed district for possible listing in the Virginia Landmarks Register and the National Register of Historic Places. This is not a formal nomination, but a necessary step in determining whether or not the district could be considered eligible for listing. Please take the time to fill in as many fields as possible. A greater number of completed fields will result in a more timely and accurate assessment. Staff assistance is available to answer any questions you have in regards to this form.

General Property Information		For Staff Use Only DHR ID #: 217-5001	
District Name(s):	Exmore Commercial Historic District		
District or Selected Building Date(s):	1890-1964	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Circa <input type="checkbox"/> Pre <input type="checkbox"/> Post	Open to the Public? <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No
Main District Streets and/or Routes:	Main St, Front St, 6th St, Commercial Ave, Bank Ave, Mapp Ave, Broad St	City: Exmore	Zip: 23350
County or Ind. City:	Northampton USGS Quad(s): Exmore		

Physical Character of General Surroundings	
Acreage: ~37	Setting (choose one): <input type="checkbox"/> City <input type="checkbox"/> Urban <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Town <input type="checkbox"/> Suburban <input type="checkbox"/> Rural <input type="checkbox"/> Transportation Corridor
Site Description Notes/Notable Landscape Features/Streetscapes: The commercial core of Exmore is located on Main Street which runs along a north-south axis and is less than a mile long and an average of one block deep on each side. The area is flat with little variation in the landscape. The buildings are generally constructed to the sidewalk on relatively narrow lots. There are sidewalks on both sides of Main Street with newly installed street lamps. There is little vegetation or landscaping, but many lots have grass and mature trees behind the buildings. The railroad line is to the east of Main Street runs northeast away from Main Street which forms a triangular area of development between Main Street and Front Street, which parallels the railroad. A few newer buildings, including city hall, have parking lots and a few vacant lots are also used for parking; otherwise parallel spaces line Main Street on the west side.	
Ownership Categories:	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Private <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Public-Local <input type="checkbox"/> Public-State <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Public-Federal

General District Information	
What were the historical uses of the resources within the proposed district? Examples include: Dwelling, Store, Barn, etc... Stores, post office, warehouses, railroad depot, bank, theater, factory, office	
What are the current uses? (if other than the historical use)	Fire station, auto servicing
Architectural styles or elements of buildings within the proposed district:	Early-to-mid-twentieth century commercial style; Colonial Revival; Art Deco; Modernistic
Architects, builders, or original owners of buildings within the proposed district:	
Are there any known threats to this district? Vacancy, neglect	

General Description of District: (Please describe building patterns, types, features, and the general architectural quality of the proposed district. Include prominent materials and noteworthy building details within the district and a general setting and/or streetscape description.)

Exmore, Virginia is located almost halfway up the Virginia Eastern Shore, the southern end of the Delmarva Peninsula, in Northampton County, just south of the line with Accomack County. It has a population of just over a thousand people with a commercial core which has expanded very little in the second half of the twentieth century. The Exmore Commercial Historic District occupies a band along Main Street which is less than a mile long and averages one-to-blocks wide. The area, like most of the Eastern Shore, is flat but is one of the highest points on the peninsula at forty-one feet; several lots at the south end of Main Street are elevated. The district consists of almost entirely commercial buildings with a handful of dwellings scattered along perimeter. The buildings are one-to-two stories except for a former department store which is three stories. The area occupied by the town was entirely farmland until the arrival of the railroad and the founding of Exmore in 1884.

This district consists of approximately thirty-seven acres running along the north-south Main Street corridor and the northeast-southwest railroad line, which come together at the southern end of the district. There are approximately fifty-seven contributing and nine non-contributing resources along with several parking lots and vacant lots. The buildings are generally constructed to the sidewalk on relatively narrow lots. There is a mixture of frame and masonry construction buildings and most feature large storefront windows. Most fall into the Commercial Style category, though some frame buildings have Colonial Revival elements. There are several mid-century Modernistic commercial buildings along with 1938 Art Deco former movie theater. The recent infill buildings follow the form and massing of the historic resources.

There are sidewalks on both sides of Main Street with newly installed street lamps. There is little vegetation or landscaping, but many lots have grass and mature trees behind the buildings. The railroad line is to the east of Main Street runs northeast away from Main Street which forms a triangular area of development between Main Street and Front Street, which parallels the railroad. A few newer buildings, including city hall, have parking lots and a few vacant lots are also used for parking; otherwise parallel parking spaces line Main Street on the west side.

Within the Exmore Commercial Historic District are several previously documented and notable buildings. Along the east side of the railroad tracks is a small historic railroad station (#217-0003) which built in 1910 as the Belle Haven station, a short distance up the road from Exmore and part of the same railroad system. In 1940 the station became a residence until 1995, when it was moved to its current location. This is the fourth building to serve as the Exmore railroad station and represents a link to the early period of rail transportation in the county. The building is a one-story, three-bay frame passenger station is set on concrete blocks and resembles stations at Cheriton and Machipongo. It has a small projecting central bay while the two side-bays have wood panel doors and transoms; the windows are 2/2 double-hung sash. The side gable roof has exposed rafter tails and a window in the shingled pediment. The interior features an open floor plan and the projecting bay forms an alcove with an historic desk from its period as a station. The walls and ceilings are beaded wainscoting.

The Western Union Building (#217-0005), located on the south side of Bank Avenue, was constructed in 1910 by M.J. Duer & Co. and served as a Western Union located until 1960. It housed the law office of Joseph Hurtt beginning in 1960, when the vault was converted into a restroom, and currently is used as an office. The one-story, two-bay brick masonry building features seven-course American bond construction. The building features a hipped roof clad in asphalt shingles atop a dentil cornice with modillion decorated overhang. The windows are single light wood 1/1 double-hung sash while a pair of windows fills the left front bay next to the right entry door, which features a transom.

One of two resources within Exmore which are listed in the Virginia Landmarks Register is the former Benjamin's Department Store (#217-0007). The building, later a Peebles Department Store and now vacant, is located on Main Street at the south end of the primary commercial corridor on the corner of Willis Wharf

Road. The rectangular building sits on an elevated lot with its western corner cutoff to form a polygon. The two-story, three-bay brick building is large for Exmore and features double door entries on both street frontages. There are heavy molded cornices over the windows between the second and third stories. There is also a bracketed cornice at the roofline. The windows and doors have been replaced with a combination of vinyl 6/1 and fixed as well as aluminum storefront windows and doors.

The one property within Exmore listed in both the Virginia Landmarks Register and the National Register of Historic Places is John W. Chandler House, also known as the Mears House (217-0009). This large, two-and-a-half frame Queen Anne Style dwelling was found eligible under Criterion C for architecture and Criterion B because of the link to John Chandler, a prominent businessman in Exmore and the Eastern Shore during the first half of the twentieth century. He also led the original platting of the town of Exmore. The house sits on a large two-and-a-half acres elevated parcel at the far southern end of Main Street within the district which features a concrete wall and walkway and mature trees and shrubs. The house features an octagonal tower, a slate hipped-cross-gable roof, and two large brick chimneys. The elaborate home has multiple projecting bays and decorative features.

Other notable buildings include a large, two-story brick masonry bank building with limestone details located at the corner of Bank Avenue and Main Street. This purpose built bank branch features innovative mid-century design as compared to most buildings on the Eastern Shore. The 1938 Cameo Theater, located mid-district on Main Street, has a pronounced five-bay Art Deco façade with intact historic black tile first story and colored tile vertical elements and an intact large blade sign on the second story. On Broad Street is a large two-story early twentieth-century brick masonry former shirt factory which now houses a tile manufacturing facility.

Significance Statement: Briefly note any significant events, personages, and/or families associated with the proposed district. It is not necessary to attach lengthy articles or genealogies to this form. Please list all sources of information. Normally, only information contained on this form is forwarded to the State Review Board.

The Eastern Shore of Virginia is the narrow southern end of the Delmarva Peninsula, no more than twenty miles wide at any point, and is divided into Accomack County to the north and Southampton County to the south. There are numerous small towns, at a higher density than most Virginia counties, but no cities. Exmore is the largest non-coastal town reflecting the reality of early Shore development being focused on a water based economy and transportation system. The basic economy of farming and fishing served the Eastern Shore residents from the early seventeenth century until the late nineteenth century. Both counties had highly successful agricultural economies and were one of the leading truck farming regions in the country well into the twentieth century.

The pre-European natives of the Eastern Shore were the Accawmackes, related to the larger Algonquin tribe and linked to the Powhatan. A 1667 outbreak of small pox, carried with a ship from Europe, decimated the Shore Native American population sending it into a long term decline. By the time of the Civil War there was no longer any documented presence of the Accowmackes. Land grants to English settlers began in 1620, a seat in the House of Burgesses was in place by 1629, the name of the settlement changed from Accawmacke to Northampton in 1642, and the two counties were created in 1662.

The first land grant in the Exmore area was to John and Mary Cobb in 1661 and part of this 600 acres forms the town of Exmore today. The town of Exmore was created in 1884 as the site of the first stop in Southampton County for the newly established New York-Pennsylvania-Norfolk Railroad, which was completed on October 25, 1884. The railroad brought the fastest and most substantial period of growth for the Shore and also began the process of transforming some elements of the economy. The train took goods (particularly local agricultural products) from the Eastern Shore more quickly and in greater quantities, and it brought more residents and visitors to the Shore. The population of the Shore reached its peak of 54,417 in 1930.

The rail line was laid roughly straight down the center of the Eastern Shore with stations being named for nearby towns, or towns being created whole cloth, as with Exmore. There are several stories regarding the source of the name "Exmore," none of which is definitive. The more popular is that the town was the tenth down the line from Delaware, thus 'X'more. There are also claims that the name existed before the railroad and may be linked to Exmoor, England. Regardless, by 1885 investors were buying land and opening stores, including the historic Benjamin's, though the current building is not the original location. What is likely the earliest street in Exmore, Bank Street, was originally called Smith Street, possibly after another early store owner, and was the location of the first post office and bank in town.

The arrival of the railroad in the late nineteenth century meant that the early twentieth century was the beginning of a boom period for Exmore. The farming and fishing industries (represented locally by the Willis Wharf commercial fishermen) increasingly used the trains to transport their goods rather than the ports. This rapid expansion of the Exmore economy meant increased building activity in the commercial core of the town. The three-story Benjamin's Store was constructed in 1928 and was followed rapidly by a hardware store and several restaurants. On July 7th, 1938 the Cameo Theater opened with a showing of *Stage Door* starring Katherine Hepburn and Ginger Rogers. Broad Street was the focus of much of the economic expansion of Exmore with C.J. Prettyman opening a large produce and truck farming station which featured strawberries, cabbage and corn amongst other vegetables. The shirt factory opened on Broad Street as well producing numerous good jobs for residents; the building remains today. Produce became the most important part of Exmore's economy by the mid-twentieth century and John H. Dulaney contributed by building a large food processing plant in 1938 employing more people than any other business. The plant included one of the largest food freezing facilities on the east coast. Agriculture helped Exmore weather the

Great Depression better than many towns and continue to expand after World War II. The town was officially incorporated in 1947 and it has the same boundaries today.

The construction of the Chesapeake Bay Bridge Tunnel in 1964, and the completion of the four lane Route 13 in 1968, dramatically altered life and the economy of the Eastern Shore. Farmers began to switch to truck transportation rather than the trains and many small towns, particularly those strongly linked to the railroad like Exmore, struggled. Passenger service was eventually eliminated from the Eastern Shore railroad. As a result Exmore, and many towns on the Shore, have retained much of their historic character and not changed dramatically since the mid-twentieth century. Probably the most significant change was the late 1950s construction of a large International Style bank branch in the center of town, which remains today, though vacant.

The Exmore Commercial Historic District is eligible under Criterion A for Commerce as an excellent example of an intact small historic Eastern Shore Main Street and for Transportation for the town's connection to the main Eastern Shore railroad line from its creation to the present day. The district is also eligible under Criterion C for Architecture as an intact small commercial downtown representing a variety of building types from the late nineteenth century through the mid-twentieth century, with good integrity.

Bibliography

Clarke, Charles B. The Eastern Shore of Maryland and Virginia, Vol. II. New York: Lewis Historical Society Publishing Co., Inc., 1950.

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Mariner, Kirk. Off 13: The Eastern Shore of Virginia Guidebook. Onancock, VA: Miona Publications, 1987.

The Peninsula Enterprise.

Smith, Michael, *The Historical Geography of Exmore, Virginia*, May 9, 1988.

Turman, Nora Miller. The Eastern Shore of Virginia, 1603-1964. Onancock, VA: The Eastern Shore News, Inc., 1964.

Wise, Henry A. Northampton County: Economic and Social. Charlottesville, VA: The University of Virginia Press, 1924.

Whitelaw, Ralph T. Virginia's Eastern Shore: A History of Northampton and Accomack Counties. Wilmington, DE: Peter Smith, 1968.

Sponsor (Individual and/or organization, with contact information. For more than one sponsor, please use a separate sheet.)

Mr. <input type="checkbox"/> Ms. <input type="checkbox"/>	New Ravenna Mosaics		
	(Name)		
3268 Broad Street	Exmore	VA	23350
(Address)	(City)	(State)	(Zip Code)
saranewravenna@gmail.com		757-442-3379	
(Email Address)		(Daytime telephone including area code)	

In the event of organization sponsorship, you must provide the name and title of the appropriate contact person.

Contact person: Ms. Sara Baldwin, President

Daytime Telephone: (757) 442-3379

Applicant Information (Individual completing form)

Mr. <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Mrs. <input type="checkbox"/>	Marcus R Pollard			Commonwealth Preservation
Ms. <input type="checkbox"/> Miss <input type="checkbox"/>				Group
	(Name)			(Firm)
PO Box 11083	Norfolk	VA	23517	
(Address)	(City)	(State)	(Zip Code)	
marcus@commonwealthpreservationgroup.com		757-651-0494		
(Email Address)		(Daytime telephone including area code)		

Applicant's Signature:

Date: 5/30/2014

Notification

In some circumstances, it may be necessary for DHR to confer with or notify local officials of proposed listings of properties within their jurisdiction. In the following space, please provide the contact information for the local County Administrator or City Manager.

Mr. <input type="checkbox"/> Mrs. <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Dr. <input type="checkbox"/>	Katherine H. Nunez			County Administrator
Miss <input type="checkbox"/> Ms. <input type="checkbox"/> Hon. <input type="checkbox"/>				(Position)
Northampton County	16404 Courthouse Road			
(Locality)	(Address)			
Eastville	VA	23347	757-678-0440, ext 515	
(City)	(State)	(Zip Code)	(Daytime telephone including area code)	

Please use the following space to explain why you are seeking an evaluation of this district.

The sponsor is renovating the Cameo Theater and may want to utilize rehabilitation tax credits.

Would you be interested in the State and/or the Federal Rehabilitation Tax Credits? Yes ☒ No ☐

Would you be interested in the easement program? Yes ☐ No ☒